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832
102

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

PHOTO SERIES NO. 26

PROCESSING STRAWBERRIES FOR FREEZING

OCTOBER 1958

The freezing of strawberries has been a rapidly growing business in recent years. Large acreages of berries are grown especially for freezing. More than 250 million pounds of strawberries a year are frozen. These pictures show how berries are processed for freezing in a large California plant. The photographs were taken for USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service.



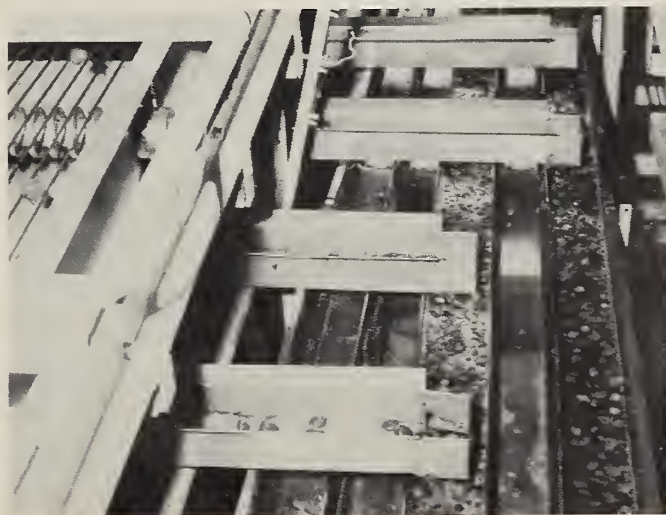
N-27212--Trucks carrying freshly hand-picked strawberries are unloaded at processing plant by fork-lifts. Fruit destined for freezing is "capped" in the field, in contrast to berries for fresh market.



N-27213--At the processing plant, the strawberries are unloaded into washers directly from the picking trays. Most processing plants of this type generally handle other fruits in season.

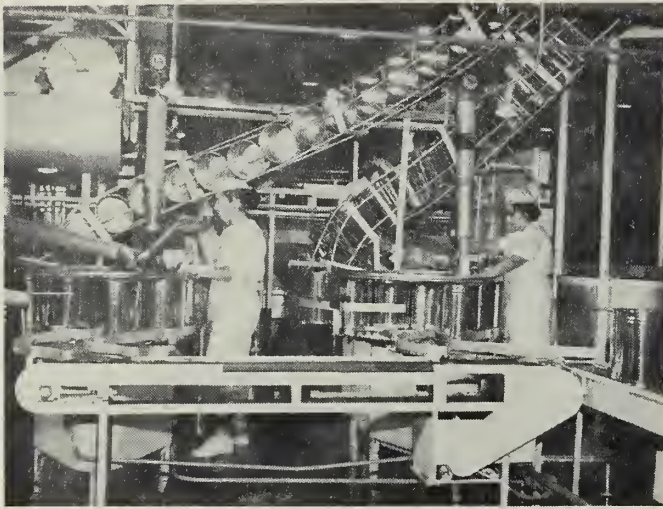


N-27215--After washing, the berries are sorted on conveyor-type belts. Culls and unripe berries are washed away in the narrow troughs, or flumes, at both sides of the belt. The workers also trim any remaining "caps" on the berries.

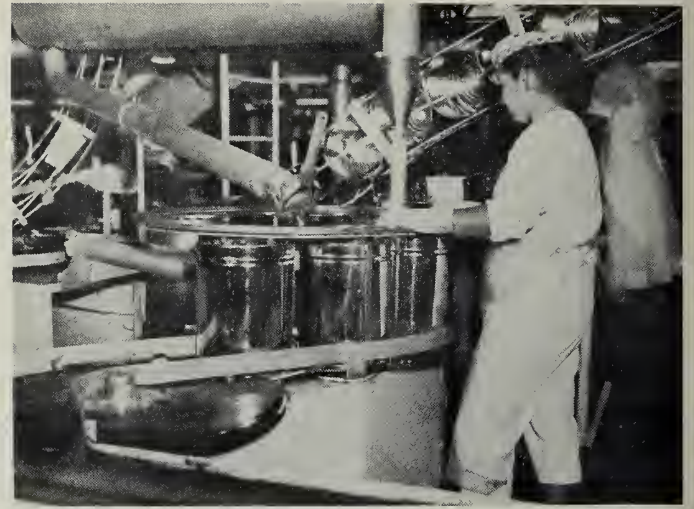


N-27216--In this plant, berries surviving the trip on the sorting belt are automatically sized and delivered to the proper "line." Sizing depends on the ultimate use of the fruit. The machine in this picture is a wire-conveyor sizer.

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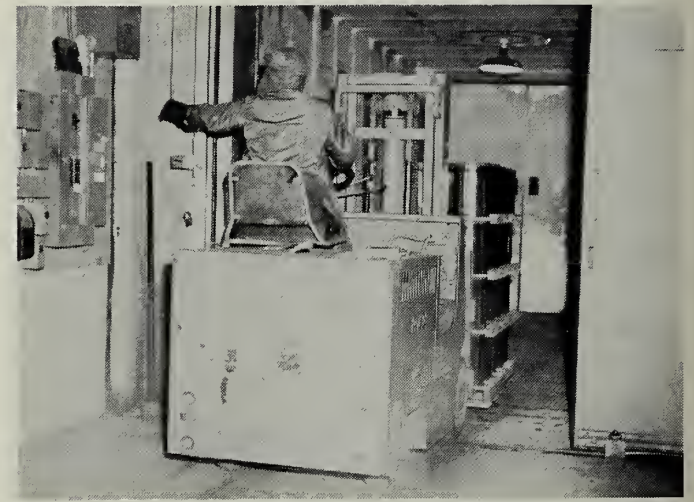
N-27218--At the end of the "line", machinery delivers 30 pound tins, fills them with 24 pounds of berries and 6 pounds of sugar, and lids them. This size tin is very popular. At one time, strawberries were frozen in 50 gallon barrels.



N-27219--Close-up of the filling and sugaring process. Berries are always sugared. This is done in one of two ways: (1) The sugar is mixed with the berries or, (2) the berries are topped with sugar. Automatic equipment, such as this, is widely used in the industry.



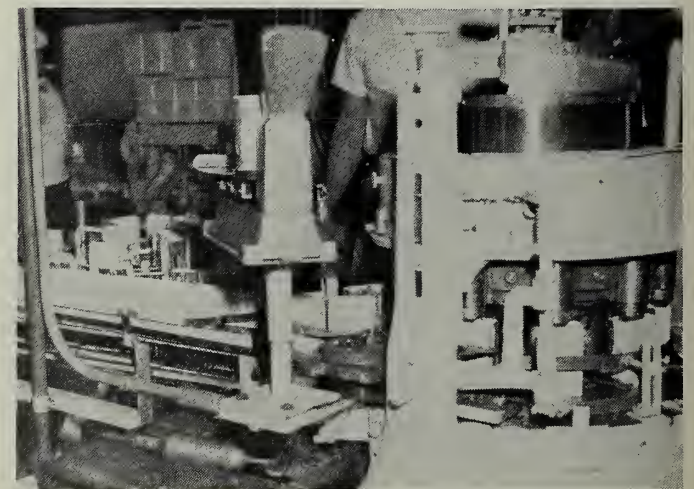
N-27220--Prior to freezing in this plant, 20 tins are placed on pallets stacked in four layers. Palletizing is standard procedure in many processing plants because of savings in time and labor.



N-27221--The pallets are hauled to the freezer. Note the parka and mittens on the fork-lift operator. Freezing equipment and operations vary widely from plant to plant.



N-27222--After 2 to 4 hours at 0 degrees F., laboratory technicians test for over-all quality, uniformity, and excellence of color. Enough time must be allowed in freezing for the berries to absorb the syrup.



N-27217--Here are the packaged frozen berries as you see them in retail stores. This machine is an automatic filler of retail-size packages.